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ABSTRACT

Career technical education is an essential component of the total educational system in the United States and is critical to the country's ability to compete in a global economy. Career technical education is provided in a variety of settings and levels and provides students and adults the technical skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in occupations and careers as well as workplace basic skills, life skills, and enhancement of academic skills and general education. The Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education believes that five key principles are essential for Career Technical Education. They believe that career technical education: (1) draws its curriculum, standards, and organizing principles from the workplace; (2) is a critical and integral component of the total educational system, offering career-oriented benefits for all students; (3) is a critical and integral component of the work force development system, providing the essential foundation for a thriving economy; (4) maintains high levels of excellence supported through identification of academic and workplace standards, measurement of performance (accountability), and high expectations for participant success; and (5) is robust and flexible enough to respond to the needs of multiple educational environments, customers, and levels of specialization. (KC)

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Career Technical Education

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An Essential Component *of the* Total Educational System

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Career Technical Education

The Premise

Career Technical Education is an essential component of the total educational system in the United States and is critical to the country's ability to compete in a global economy. This education for the workplace has been called vocational education, technical education, career education, applied education, professional-technical education, occupational education, and workforce training. For the purposes of this statement, it will be referred to as Career Technical Education. Career Technical Education is provided in a variety of settings and levels including middle school career exploration, secondary programs, postsecondary certificates and degrees, and customized training for employees in the workplace. Career Technical Education also provides students and adults (1) the technical skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in occupations and careers, (2) the cross-functional or workplace basics necessary for success in any occupation or career (such as problem solving, teamwork, and the ability to find and use information) as well as skills for balancing family and work responsibilities, and (3) the context in which traditional academic skills and a variety of more general educational goals can be enhanced.

Career Technical Education is an essential component of the total educational system in the United States and is critical to the country's ability to compete in a global economy.

Because of this wide scope, developing a single set of defining principles covering all aspects of the enterprise is complex. The following principles are intended to cover that scope but may apply somewhat differently, depending on the level or specific educational context. The principles also focus on the narrower, programmatic definition of Career Technical Education as well as the integrated role this enterprise plays in the total educational delivery system.

An Essential Component *of the* Total Educational System

Key Principles

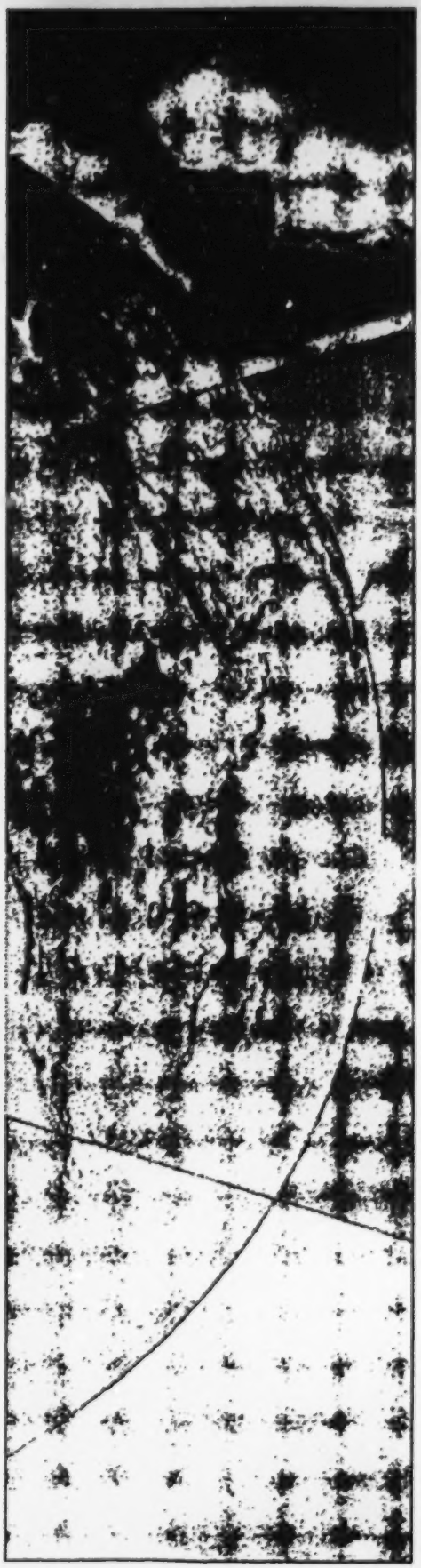
We believe that Career Technical Education:

1. Draws its curricula, standards, and organizing principles from the workplace.

It is this principle that connects and defines all Career Technical Education. Educational curricula is primarily drawn from one of two sources: (1) the academic discipline or (2) the workplace. Career Technical Education is unique because it draws its curriculum primarily from the workplace. The workplace provides the context, objectives, and organizing constructs for instruction and assessment. The workplace also defines the standards of performance necessary, including those required for academic, technical, and employability skills.

2. Is a critical and integral component of the total educational system, offering career-oriented benefits for all students.

Career Technical Education offers benefits for all students ranging from providing a contextual environment for developing higher-level academic skills to providing specific industry certification in an occupational field. Career Technical Education offers educational benefits to students pursuing careers requiring specific technical skills as well as providing a strong foundation for those pursuing a traditional four-year (or more) degree. It is an integral component of the total education mission, contributing to the goals of high academic achievement, student retention and motivation, and the development of general workplace and life skills. Students participating in these programs are prepared to be successful at the next level in the workplace or in education. Because Career Technical Education is integral to the total educational system, partnerships with other educators, as well as business professionals, are essential. In fact, Career Technical Educators are often the catalyst for bringing education and work together. Finally, Career Technical Education has a long and successful history of enhancing student leadership, teamwork, and citizenship skills through Career and Technical Student Organizations.

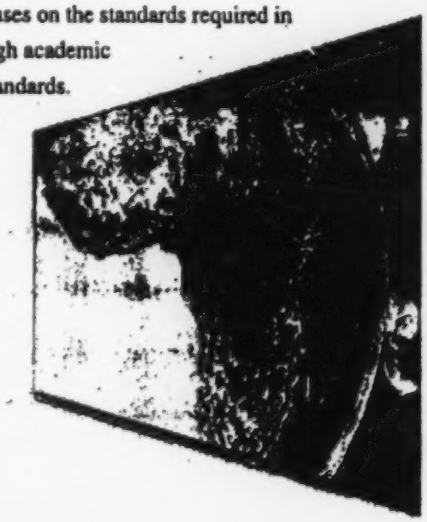


3. ***Is a critical and integral component of the workforce development system, providing the essential foundation for a thriving economy.***

Society's economic engine is driven by a well-prepared, qualified workforce. Preparation of that workforce requires solid academics, good work ethics, and specific technical skills as well as the ability to communicate, work with others, solve problems, and use information. Career Technical Education contributes directly to this preparation by providing a curriculum tied to specific workplace requirements. It enhances the interaction of education and work, bringing the benefits of real world problems and resources to the educational enterprise. This effort also improves the general understanding and working relationships between education and the rest of the world, thus creating synergistic benefits for both environments. In order for these benefits to accrue, working partnerships are created and maintained between business, labor, and education.

4. ***Maintains high levels of excellence supported through identification of academic and workplace standards, measurement of performance (accountability), and high expectations for participant success.***

Career Technical Education focuses on the standards required in the workplace. This includes high academic standards as well as technical standards. Standards are measured through a variety of validated tools and facilitated by systems to maintain and project accountability. Career Technical Education is committed to continuous improvement, attention to industry certification, and the development of highly qualified teachers.



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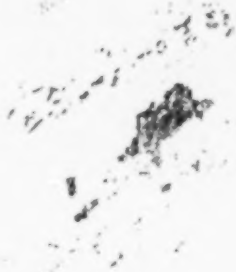
5. ***Is robust and flexible enough to respond to the needs of the multiple educational environments, customers, and levels of specialization.***

Career Technical Education involves a large and complex delivery system that (1) integrates career exploration, (2) provides effective tools for organizing all curricula, (3) facilitates the teaching and use of technology, (4) is integrated into the total learning experience, (5) enhances the learning of academic subjects, (6) teaches broad occupational skills, (7) includes all aspects of the industry, (8) teaches how to balance family and work responsibilities, (9) provides job-specific training, (10) is offered at multiple levels of the educational continuum, and (11) is delivered through a variety of educational environments. Career Technical Education meets the needs of a wide range of customers, communities, schools, postsecondary institutions, and businesses. It also responds quickly to changes in the workplace and schools. Career Technical Education links secondary and postsecondary curricula as well as academic and technical curricula. In order for students and adults to take full advantage of the opportunities available, comprehensive career guidance is provided as an integral component of the educational experience including current, relevant information about workplace and educational requirements and the opportunities for developing the skills to meet both. Finally, these quality educational and workplace experiences reach all students with special efforts to ensure career success for those students with additional challenges.



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